



PETROICA FUSCA: *Gould.*

J. Gould and H.C. Richter del^t

C. Hollman del. imp.

PETROICA FUSCA, *Gould.*

Dusky Robin.

THIS unadorned species of Robin is very abundantly distributed over all those parts of Van Diemen's Land that are suitable to its habits; it gives preference to thinly-timbered hills, and all such plains and low grounds as are sterile and covered here and there with thickets and stunted brushwood. In its manners and whole economy it closely assimilates to the Red-breasted Robins; I frequently observed it sitting on the stumps of dead and fallen trees, on the railings of inclosures, gardens and other similar situations. Its food appeared to consist solely of insects, which it swallows entire, even coleoptera of a large size.

Its nest, which is rather large and of a cup-shape, is formed of coarse fibrous roots, small twigs, strings of bark and dried grasses intermixed with very fine hair-like fibrous roots, wool, and the soft seed-stalks of mosses. The size and form of the nest depend upon the nature of the situation chosen for a site; if a ledge or fissure of a rock, it is much spread out, but with the inside and top very neatly finished; the opening measures on an average about two inches and a half, and the nest is about one inch and a quarter in depth.

The eggs, which are three or four in number, differ in colour from those of every other member of the genus, but more nearly assimilate in tint and markings to those of *Petroica bicolor* than of any other. They are of a light greenish blue, freckled and spotted with minute indistinct markings of brown; their medium length is ten lines, and breadth seven and a half lines.

Although I have paid considerable attention to the distribution of this species, I have never been able to meet with it on the continent of Australia, or in any other country than Van Diemen's Land; still I cannot positively assert that it is not an inhabitant of the Australian continent. It is very numerous about Hobart Town, both in the gulleys under Mount Wellington, and on the opposite side of the Derwent towards Clarence Plains.

Its note is low and monotonous, without any peculiar character.

The sexes differ from all the other members of the genus in being alike in colour, and cannot possibly be distinguished without the aid of dissection.

Head, and all the upper surface reddish brown tinged with olive; wings and tail brown; primaries and secondaries crossed by a narrow line of white at the base; the outer tail-feather on each side margined externally, and at the tip with white; under surface pale brown, passing into buffy white on the vent and under tail-coverts; irides, bill and feet blackish brown.

The young is very dark brown above, striated with deep buff; beneath mottled brown and buffy white; the latter colour occupying the centre of the feathers.

The Plate represents a male and two young birds of the natural size.